

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: CA-080-211-Juniper Flats East

Results of Analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Conclusion

☐ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

☒ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.

Wilderness Inventory
CDCA Wilderness Inventory Unit #211
CA-080-212 Juniper Flats West
August 13, 2012

Background

Under Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLMPA) the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is required to maintain an inventory of public land resources, including lands with wilderness characteristics. Wilderness characteristics are part of the resource values to be considered in inventories the BLM undertakes. The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the National Wilderness Preservation System which identified a system of federally managed areas designated by Congress as “wilderness areas”. The goal of the Wilderness Act was to “secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefit of an enduring resource of wilderness.” While the terms “wilderness character” and “wilderness characteristic” are not explicitly defined in the Wilderness Act, Section 2(c) identifies the wilderness characteristics used for evaluation of lands proposed for wilderness protections. The terms generally used to describe and evaluate lands with wilderness characteristics include size, naturalness, opportunities for solitude and/or primitive and unconfined recreation and special features of “ecological, geological or other features of scientific, scenic or historic value.”

All public lands within the California Desert District (CDD) were inventoried between 1978 and 1979 through a sequential process to determine if any of the CDD lands possessed wilderness characteristics. This process initially involved identifying Wilderness Inventory Units (WIUs) that were considered to potentially contain wilderness characteristics. Through a BLM cataloging of resources and with public involvement all the WIUs were reviewed at that time. The WIUs or portions of land within a WIU that were found to have wilderness characteristics were identified by the BLM in 1979 as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and lands not found to have wilderness characteristics were managed without wilderness considerations. A WSA is managed to maintain their wilderness suitability until Congress either designates them as wilderness or denies this designation. A final intensive study phase between 1979 and 1991, which included the preparation of mineral surveys and an environmental impact statement and additional public involvement, led the BLM to recommend to the Secretary of the Interior that some of these WSAs should be designated as wilderness and others released for other management. The Secretary then forwarded his recommendations to Congress which has taken action to designate wilderness areas and WSAs in the CDD.

Since the original wilderness characteristic inventories are more than thirty years old, they are being updated at this time. The reason for this update is to accommodate the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) in designating lands being considered for development by determining if conditions in the units have changed (i.e., do wilderness characteristics exist in

locations where they were not present in the 1979). Several management factors could result if changes are found in these units. Specific examples would be, if natural or agency-initiated reclamation projects have restored the natural conditions or if land acquisitions have restored the ability for a solitary recreation, in either case wilderness characteristics are now present and the agency might have to manage these lands for their existence.

As part of the preparation of this wilderness update, a records research was done. The permanent inventory file for WIU #211 could not be located for this review however the descriptive narrative for the unit was found in the *California Desert Conservation Area, Wilderness Inventory, Final Descriptive Narratives, March 31, 1979* (http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/pa/wilderness/wi.Par.92238.File.dat/CDCAWildernessInvNarr_Final_March1979.pdf) and the pages which describe this unit have been included in the appendix section. Other sources of information used in the research and writing of this inventory report were: *the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980* (http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/pdfs/cdd_pdfs.Par.aa6ec747.File.pdf/CA_Desert.pdf), the *Juniper Flats Cultural Area Management Plan of 1988*, the 1998 Victorville Desert Access Guide (DAG) and the Juniper Flats Sub Region Off Highway Vehicle West Mojave Supplement Map which showed open travel routes on BLM administered lands. Two field reconnaissance trips were made on May 13 and 31 July, 2012 to record and photograph the unit's environmental situation. The trips involved driving designated routes within and county roads around the unit to help redefine the 1979 boundaries.

Year 2012 Inventory Unit Number/Name CA-080-211, Juniper Flats East

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?

Yes

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory files, California Desert Conservation Area

Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): Area 211

Map Name(s)/Number(s): USDI BLM California Desert Wilderness Final Inventory, Dec. 1979

BLM District(s)/Field Office(s): Barstow Field Office

2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics:

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory files, BLM Barstow FO

Unit#/ Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
211	N/A	N	N	N	N/A

Summarize any known primary reasons for prior findings in this table:

The 1979 California Desert Conservation Area inventory unit number 211 covered a large area bounded on the north by a Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway spur line, to the east by Grapevine Canyon Road a maintained road, to the west by Bowen Ranch Road then Coxey Road and to the south by the San Bernardino National Forest. It was estimated that about eighty percent of the land in this area was public with the only private lands located along the northern border. A Pinyon-Juniper woodland community existed above 4000 feet while the lower elevations were a mixed shad-scale and creosote scrub. Small-scale mining existed in the area with small communities at the base of the mountains and within the interior, although the 1979 report indicated the interior dwellings as "shacks". The canyons and ridges maintained the naturalness of the area despite the presence of the several roads. Opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation were limited in the area due to the scattered inhabitants and clearings associated with these structures on private lands within this area. Public comments about the area combined with the above findings, eliminated this area from further consideration for wilderness characteristics.

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-211, Juniper Flats East

(1) Sufficient size

Acreage: The rough estimate of Area 211 is 6,858 acres pending a GIS calculation with a perimeter of 18½ miles long.

Boundaries: This area does not have well defined boundaries for the eastern and northern borders. The eastern boundary is a maintained dirt road from Grapevine Canyon called either Grapevine Canyon Road or BLM designated route JF 3225. The southern boundary is the San Bernardino National Forest. The western boundary is Bowen Ranch Road. The northern boundary is a steel structure powerline and a railroad spur owned by the Burlington National Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad company.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: The majority of land within the area is managed by the BLM with some private lands located in two places: just south of the rail lines and west of the radio tower off of route JF3223.

Location: Area 211 is located in the northern foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains. This area consists of a large tract of public lands with the few private lands in the located in the northern section close to the BNSF railroad spur. The area is southeast the Apple Valley developments and State highway 18. It is west of the Mojave River and Bowen Ranch Road services as the western boundary. The southern edge of the area is north of the San Bernardino National Forest. This area is commonly referred to as the "Juniper Flats".

Topography: Rolling mesas, hills and mountains interspersed with steep valleys ending in a rolling flat mountain top mesa. The base of this area alters rapidly from low hills and canyons to steep mountainsides. The entire area lies rough and rugged, with water often difficult to find. The soil is many a dirt/sand mix with rocks scattered at higher elevations. Temperatures in the area range from below freezing in January to 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more in July.

Vegetation features: Due to the Willow Fire of 1999, the vegetation features have significantly changed in this area. The Pinyon-Juniper plant community which once dominated the mountain areas is mostly gone, only existing in small patches none being larger than an acre in size. Now the dominant plant community is mixed Mojave woody scrub. The mixed Mojave woody scrub is open and sparse with an abundance of bare soil between plants that gets more open and sparse as elevations increase. The most common plants in the area are: creosote bush, desert peach, needle-grass, paper bag bush, brittlebush, cacti, Joshua trees and yucca. Quail and other small birds, ground squirrels, mule deer and bobcats dwell in the area while red-tail hawks soar above.

Major human uses/activities: Semi-primitive motorized recreation which includes all types of off-highway vehicular (OHV) use on designated routes. Other recreational uses include camping

(dispersed camping is also evidenced throughout the area), hiking, wildlife study and hunting. The area also has a grazing allotment (Round Mountain) which typically has a hundred cattle in the area with associated grazing equipment in use. The VP mine was an underground gold prospect but no official records were found.

(2) Natural condition

No

In addition to the Willow Fire of 1999 which changed the landscape from a dominate Pinyon-Juniper woodland to a mixed Mojave woody scrub we see today. There is a microwave tower structure on the eastern end and various meteorological towers scattered within the area. Various dwellings occupy the interior and their entrance roads are visible. The increase of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use has also lessened the natural area's appearance.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

No

Both the mountainous interior and the base of the mountains have more dwellings and residents living there today. The upland area has seen increased levels of public off-highway vehicle (ohv) use with many new/illegal tracks seen from the boundaries. The reduction in the Pinyon-Juniper plant community to one that is mixed Mojave woody scrub dominated has also substantially decreased opportunities for solitude.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

No

As in the 1979 inventory, this area is crisscrossed with OHV routes (both legal and illegal) making it the significant recreational pursuit making primitive recreation difficult. The removal of the forest community has increased the impediments for opportunities for solitude.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes

The Juniper Flats Cultural Area at roughly 4,500 acres is partially located within this area and it shows evidence of prehistoric Native American activities and historic homesteading. Also there are many historic mines located within this area.

Appendix A

Route Analysis of Area 211

Appendix C - Route Analysis

Evaluator(s): Tim Williamson

Route #	Purpose	ROW Y/N/UK	ROW In Use?	Constructed Mechanically	Type of Evidence	Improved Mechanically	Hand Tools Or Machinery	Type of Evidence
JF 3225	Admin Communication Site	Y	Y	Y	Blading	Y	Machinery	Roadside Berms
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			Erosion
Unnamed	Powerline	Y	Y	Y	Bladed	Y	Machinery	Roadside Berms
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			Uphill
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
JF 3223	Admin	UK	UK	Y	Roadside Berms	Y	Machinery	Ravines in place
JF 3227	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
JF 3221M	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
JF 3219M	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
JF 3359M	Recreation	N	N	N	Single Track			

WIU #211

Appendix C - Route Analysis

Date: 07/31/12

Evaluator(s): Tim Williamson

Route #	Purpose	ROW Y/N/UK	ROW In Use?	Constructed Mechanically	Type of Evidence	Improved Mechanically	Hand Tools Or Machinery	Type of Evidence
Unnamed	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
JF 3355M	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track			
3N14 (or) Coxey Truck Trail	Admin	Y	Y	Y	Bladed	Y	Machinery	Roadside Berms
Unnamed	Range	Y	Y	N	Two Track	N		Livestock Evidence

Appendix B

Photo Log of Area 211

Photos for Area 211



#1 - Route 3310 - Northeast view



#2 - Route 3255 - Eastern view



#3 - Route 3221 - Northeastern view



#4 - Route 3221 - Northwestern view



#5 - Route 3221 - Southwestern view



#6 - Route 3221 - Northeastern view



#7 - Santa Rosa Road - Southern view

Photo Log for Area 211				
Photo #	GPS	Town & Range	Dir	Description
1	3803571 N 485990 E	T3N R3W Sec 1	NE	Rolling Hills/Mtns, Creosote Scrub, Rocks - Rt3310
2	3804740 N 489261 E	T3N R2W Sec 5	E	Rolling Hills, Creosote Scrub - Rt3255
3	3803140 N 491145 E	T3N R2W Sec 4	NE	Rolling Hills, Creosote Scrub - Rt3221
4	3803264 N 493826 E	T3N R2W Sec 2	NW	Top of Mtn, Creosote Scrub & Juniper Patch, Rocks - Rt3221
5	3803264 N 493826 E	T3N R2W Sec 2	SW	Top of Mtn, Creosote Scrub & Juniper Patch, Rocks - Rt3221
6	3803264 N 493826 E	T3N R2W Sec 2	NE	Top of Mtn, Creosote Scrub & Juniper Patch, Rocks - Rt3221
7	3808760N 493373 E	T4N R2W Sec 27	S	Base of Mtn, Creosote Scrub, Upslope - Santa Rosa Rd

Appendix C

BLM California Desert Conservation Area Wilderness Final Inventory, Dec. 1979

Written Description & Map of Area 211

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Many comments were received. The majority indicated that man's presence detracted from wilderness qualities. Others supported inclusion of a small area.

AREA 210A

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is bordered on the west by Central Road, Stoddard Hill Road, and a mining railroad spur; on the north, by a pipeline road right-of-way; on the east, by Lucerne Valley Cutoff and Highway 247; and, on the south by a maintained dirt road.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The roadless area is more than 50 percent non-public land although public lands occur mostly in one block.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The area includes Sidewinder Mountain, Black Mountain, and portions of Sidewinder Valley and North Lucerne Valley. The maximum altitude is 5272 feet on Sidewinder Mountain, while elevations on the valley floors range from 3000 to 3400 feet. The mountains consist of decomposed granite and support a Joshua Tree Woodland plant community on more gentle slopes where exposure and soil depth allow.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Man-made features significantly alter the primeval character and influence of the land over much of the area, particularly on Black Mountain and the lower northern slopes of Sidewinder Mountain. A railroad spur enters the area from the west to service a rock quarry atop Black Mountain. Maintained access roads and numerous ways in the vicinity of Black Mountain further impact the apparent naturalness. Scattered mining activity is evident on Sidewinder Mountain. In contrast to Black Mountain and the valley floors where man and his works dominate the landscape, a large portion of Sidewinder Mountain is disturbed by man.

V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

This area is similar in character to Area 210 to the south, but that portion which retains its natural character is small in size; therefore, opportunities for solitude and for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are limited.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments received are related to study phase factors.

AREA 211

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The northern boundary is a spur of the Santa Fe Railroad and a large steel-structure powerline. The eastern border is a maintained road through Grapevine Canyon. The western border is a graded road (Bowen Ranch Road) through Arrastre Canyon and Forest Service Road 3N14. The southern boundary is the San Bernardino National Forest.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area is 80 percent public lands with non-public lands located along the northern border.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The area consists of a section of foothills of the northern San Bernardino Mountains and a portion of the south slope of Fifteen Mile Valley between Lucerne Valley and Apple Valley. The foothills consist of rugged canyons and huge boulders and support a Pinyon-Juniper woodland above 4000 feet. Joshua Tree Woodland, some Shadscale Scrub,

and Creosote Bush Scrub are encountered below 4000 feet toward the valley floor. Maximum elevation is 5880 feet along Grapevine Canyon road at the National Forest boundary. Lowest elevation in the area is 3200 feet, near the railroad on the northern boundary.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Many roads and ways have been constructed, as have several habitations. One small housing development has 15 to 20 homes. These permanent improvements and human habitations alter the primeval character and influence of the land. The higher areas of the San Bernardino foothills contain several ways among the rugged, heavily wooded canyons and ridges. These ways may receive some hand maintenance as they are used for access to a number of inhabited shacks. The areas immediately surrounding these occupancies have been improved in support of the dwellings, with moderate clearing and outbuildings. Good vegetative and topographic screening serve to isolate these improvements. Small-scale mining activity occurs to a very limited degree, but is substantially unnoticeable.

V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

The valley portion does not contain topographic or vegetative features which would provide screening from intrusions. Opportunities for solitude are limited. Habitation in the area further detracts from opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities. The higher elevations in this roadless area contain canyons, huge assemblages of granite boulders, and good stands of Pinyon and Juniper. However, areas of solitude, and especially areas offering outstanding opportunities for unconfined recreation, are segmented and scattered by the occupancies and associated access roads through the area. Thus, marginal recreational opportunities, coupled with the number of man-made improvements, have eliminated this area from further consideration as to wilderness characteristics.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The few comments received were split between support for wilderness study inclusion of the transition area between high desert and mountain plant communities and exclusion due to the presence of improvements.

AREA 212

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is defined along its eastern border by a graded dirt road (Bowen Ranch Road) and a U.S. Forest Service Road. The northern boundary is a steel-structure powerline right-of-way and a network of graded streets as access to habitations along the slopes below Juniper Flat. The western boundary is Deep Creek Road, for ease of definition, but actually is defined by numerous graded dirt roads to dwellings below the Ord Mountains. The southern boundary is the San Bernardino National Forest.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area is mostly public lands. Areas around the base of Juniper Flat are totally non-public. Several other non-public sections intrude into the area along Bowen Ranch Road.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The area consists of a mesa at approximately 4000 feet to 4600 feet which is vegetated with the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland plant community. The northern and western edges of the mesa drop abruptly through a series of deep canyons to Apple Valley and the Mojave River Valley at approximately 3200 feet. The slope lessens considerably at approximately 3400 feet where numerous housing developments have proliferated. The Joshua Tree Woodland is the common plant community encountered here. The top of the mesa is generally flat, but has many irregularities. Small valleys and hills and several large granite rock formations present a rugged landscape.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Man's imprint upon the landscape can be seen throughout much of this area. A large steel-structure powerline splits Juniper Flat from northeast to southwest, but does not have an accompanying maintenance road along its entire route due to the



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Appendix D

Current Land Status Map of Area 211

Juniper Flats East - Area 211

